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Zizania as Found by the Explorers of the Northwest.

BY E. J. HILL.

That the wild rice has long been considered a characteristic plant of this region is easily shown by an examination of the writings of the explorers of this country, from those of the French to the latest of Schoolcraft. Those of the French are not at hand, but abundant citations could be made from those of the English and Americans, and few must suffice. Captain Jonathan Carver, (1765-68), speaks of its "great abundance" in the valley of the St. Pierre, (since 1852 the Minnesota) up which he must have gone about 200 miles. Alexander Mackenzie (1789-'93), mentions its "abundance" along the "Grande Portage," the chain of lakes and rivers from Lake Superior to the Lake of the Woods, and the use of it by the Algonquins. He makes the following statement regarding its northward range: "To the north of fifty degrees it is hardly known, or at least does not come to maturity."* Major Zebulon Pike, (1805, 1806), tells of its great plenty about the sources of the Mississippi, and of its sale by the Indians to the fur-traders for their subsistence. In the account of the Lake of the Woods in Major Long's expedition, Prof. Keating, who accompanied the party as geologist and historiographer, writes: "We found in great abundance the plant which bears the wild rice; it was quite ripe at that season.† The Indians collect the grain in great plenty, considering it as one of their best articles of food, and that upon which they can place the greatest reliance. We have been led to make some inquiry as to the extent of the region in which the wild rice grows, and we find it to be very great. Mackenzie says that wild rice is hardly seen, or does not come to maturity, north of the fiftieth degree of latitude, and we believe that it does not grow west of the Mississippi below the mouth of the Missouri, or on any part of this river. Its western extremities are probably about the sources of the St. Peter; it ranges in latitude from the thirty-first to the fiftieth degree, and in longitude from the Atlantic to the ninety-seventh degree."‡

*Mackenzie's Voyage, London, 1801, p. LXI.

†End of August.

‡L. c. Vol. 2, p. 106.

Schoolcraft was connected with three expeditions to the Mississippi, either as principal or assistant. The volumes he wrote concerning them abound in references to the natural history of the section he traversed, for he was a careful observer. Among these the wild rice finds frequent mention, though least in the account of the journey to the central Mississippi, since the plant did not particularly characterize that region. In the expedition of 1832, when he traced the river to Itasca Lake, and subsequently ascended the St. Croix, he speaks there of the latter river. "Both branches, together with its lower tributaries, and their numerous lakes, yield the northern rice plant. The abundance of the plant has led to the local term of the Folle Avoine country, a name by which it is particularly known in the transactions of the fur-trade."* In the account of the first expedition, when describing the physical characteristics of the Mississippi, and of its origin in a region of lakes, he speaks as follows of its upper waters: "It pursues its course to the falls of Peckagama, a distance of two hundred miles through a low prairie, covered with wild rice, rushes, sword-grass and other aquatic plants."† And in giving what he regards as the most characteristic plant, he continues: "The wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*), is not found on the waters of the Mississippi south of the forty-first degree of north latitude, nor the Indian reed or cane‡ north of the thirty-eighth. These two productions characterize the extremities of the river."§ The range is not strictly correct as to area; it is as to abundance and use of the plant by the Indians. One extract from the remaining volume will show how he looked upon the rice of the lower lakes as compared with that of the Fox River, Wis., which belongs to Lake Michigan, and that of the Upper Mississippi. He came upon it first at the mouth of the Maumee, where now is the city of Toledo, and makes this comparison:

*Narrative of an expedition through the Upper Mississippi to Itasca Lake, embracing an exploratory trip through the St. Croix and Bornwood or Broulé Rivers. New York, 1834, p. 140.

†Narrative Journal of Travels through the Northwestern Regions of the United States, extending from Detroit through the Great Chain of American Lakes to the sources of the Mississippi River, etc, in the year 1820. Albany, 1821, p. 255.

‡*Arundinaria macrosperma* and var.

§L. c. p. 259.

"Its banks are flat and thickly wooded and conspicuously bordered by aquatic plants. Among them the common bulrush and the wild oat or rice may be noted. The latter plant, to which the natives apply the soft name of monomin*, presents a beautiful aspect when in flower, but it does not attain that luxuriant growth which we have observed near the sources of the Mississippi and along the shores of the Fox River, so abundant in this native grain. * * In ordinary seasons the quantity which is gathered in certain parts of Michigan† and Hudson's Bay Territories is truly surprising. We are informed by Mr. Harman that at a single post on Rainy Lake, the Northwest (now Hudson's Bay) Company purchased from the natives an annual supply of twelve or fifteen hundred bushels, and it constitutes a principal article of food at the trading posts in that quarter."‡ And I may add that Carver alone did not find the plant of the lower lakes equal to that farther west. He devotes the last chapter of his volume to the plants which attracted his attention, especially those of use to the Indians, and says of the wild rice: "I found great quantities of it in the watered lands near Detroit, between Lake Huron and Lake Erie, but on enquiry I learned that it never arrived nearer to maturity than just to blossom, after which it appeared blighted and died away."§ This he ascribed to climatic conditions that the present experience of fruit growing and agriculture in Michigan would hardly warrant. Whether the condition was temporary or still holds would be well to verify, since it seems to have been well-marked at the time.

From these extracts and observations it appears that the wild rice, though plentiful and known to have been gathered by the Indians in the regions between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, as well as elsewhere, had its principal field in the country west of Lake Michigan, in Wisconsin, Minnesota and a part of

*Chippeway.

†Michigan Territory then embraced the region of the Upper Mississippi, or at least was governed from Detroit after 1818.

‡Travels in the Central Portions of the Mississippi Valley. Performed under the sanction of Government, in the year 1821, by Henry R. Schoolcraft. New York, 1825, pp. 20, 21.

§Travels through the interior parts of North America in the year 1766, 1767 and 1768, by J. Carver, Esq., 3d Ed., London, 1781, p. 525.

the Hudson Bay Territory. Of this, but a comparatively small part was tributary to Lake Superior and Lake Michigan, the Fox River Valley being the chief one. And nearly all the region of Indiana and Illinois, though much less abundant in the production, must be added. I have been thus particular regarding this plant, not alone to correct any error that may have arisen concerning it, but to bring together some facts concerning a state of things that has largely passed away, or will soon be of the past, like the Indians who once were in power here. Those still gather the grain who live in the region of the Upper Mississippi and the Red River, and perhaps some scattered communities in Wisconsin. I saw some of it in 1889 at Vermilion Lake, where a few of them still reside; soon, however, it was said, to move elsewhere.

A New Locality for *Lychnis Flosculi*, L.

The last edition of the Manual gives the range of this plant as New England and New York. It is but sparingly established in New York, however. Dr. Watson informs me that it was collected at Old Chatham, N. Y., in 1888, by C. E. Faxon. This is the only place in the state at which I can learn of its having been found until last season; it was collected by my brother at Irvington on the Hudson. The station is at the Irving grounds, just north of Irvington. Quite a number of specimens were found growing in the edge of the lawn near the entrance to the grounds. The frequent mowing of the lawn had kept them from becoming very numerous; but farther north and directly west of the house, there is a strip of waste land bordering the Irving grounds on one side and the Hudson River Railroad on the other. Here the plant was found growing quite abundantly. How it became established here is uncertain. It may possibly have been cultivated on the grounds at some former time, or its proximity to the railroad may account for it.

However this may be, it seems to have thoroughly established itself at this place.

CORNELIUS L. SHEAR.

Botanical Note.

The Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania have issued their Calendar for 1890-91. This little pamphlet contains a brief